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Heavy curtains of pale blue gray hang just behind the young lady, who is inhaling the scent of a branch of white lilac. More lilacs, a basin full of water, an open paint-box, a sketch block and other things litter the sofa. It is a scene of the most interesting artistic confusion, and is capitally done.

Our resident New York artists do not make much of a show, and one begins to wonder what they can have been doing of late. Possibly the coming exhibition of the Society of American Artists and the Spring Exhibition of the Academy will show. William M. Chase is represented by his river scene, well known in New York; Mr. Shirlaw by a sketch several years old of some apple trees and a reedy stream; Mr. Quartley by "A Long Island Shipyard," with rather fussy foreground, an unsubstantial-looking hull upon the stays, and a tormented sky. His friends and acquaintances will be glad to know that Edward Dowdall comes out almost as strong as any of the Parisians with a handsome, laughing girl in white, posed against a pale blue curtain. The face and arms and hands are beautifully painted; the coloring is agreeable and truthful; the pose unaffected. Robert Vonnoh is the only one of the Munich men who, while keeping strictly to the teachings of his school, has made a hit. His portrait of a young man with a blonde mustache is a fine piece of work.

This is the first year in which the Temple endowment for the purchase of works of art becomes available. It produces now \$1800 per year. This Mr. Temple has increased to \$3000 to provide for a competition in historical painting. The competition has brought out two clever and important pictures, either of which might fairly be adjudged the prize. The best, in our opinion, is Sarah P. Dodson's "Signing the Declaration." This is, we believe, the largest picture in the exhibition. It is full of figures, arranged in animated groups and very well painted. The faces, costumes and accessories seem to have been carefully studied from authentic relics and documents of the Revolutionary time. Some of the distant figures appear to be little more than blocked in as if there was not time to finish them. They hold their places well, however, and do not interfere with the general effect of the picture. The other composition represents the taking of the oath of allegiance at Valley Forge. Washington stands in the foreground to the right and Aide-de-camp John Laurens behind him. Lord Stirling, Baron Steuben, De Kalb and General Wayne are grouped about a round table on which rests the Bible in the centre. St. Clair, Hamilton and Tilghman are near a desk in the corner. The faces of all except Washington have been left in an unsatisfactory condition, otherwise the painting is complete. The grouping is very spirited, and what with the uniforms of the officers and the background of white panelled wall the color effect is quite agreeable. These two pictures should serve to turn the ambitions of more of our young painters into this channel. "The March to Valley Forge," by W. T. Trego, was perhaps intended at first for this competition, but though the artist has made it evident that he possesses talent, his utter lack of skill is too apparent to give him the ghost of a chance.

Of the less important paintings many are nevertheless remarkably good or very promising. E. L. Weeks has several East Indian subjects glowing with color, full of life and strange incident and scenery. "The Maharajah's Boat on the Ganges" shows the water front of a ghaut at Benares, the steps thronged with people, who are watching the great barge with a wooden peacock at its prow being propelled into the stream by a score of rowers in crimson tunics. S. Van Schaik has another Eastern subject—two old Moors, one of them testing the elasticity of a sword-blade—which is quite as good. F. Brownell has some women spinning; S. T. Darra's an evening landscape without form but good in tone; C. Coleman some things and a flower branch arranged, not badly, against a wall; F. S. Church one of his pink-and-white designs suitable for the cover of a bon-bon box. More hopeful are "Pater Noster," by Carl J. Melchers; "The Young Boat-Builders," by M. W. Lesley; "By the Sea," B. F. Gilman; "Idyl," F. E. Kirkpatrick; and "Rainy Day at Pont Aven," Clifford P. Grayson. "Old Age," by F. S. Dellenbaugh, should have been mentioned among the unquestioned successes of the exhibition, and so also should have been a landscape with sand dunes and

rocks, by H. Bolton Jones. Even now, we are in all probability passing over several excellent works, as many were yet unhung at the time of our visit. The exhibition, as a whole, gives more hope for the future of American art than any that has taken place in a long time.

ROGER RIORDAN.

#### AUTUMN EXHIBITION OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY.

THE National Academy of Design appears to be in the last throes. We shall never again know it as we knew it of yore, confident in its full possession of the field, loading the walls of its exhibition rooms with scores of wretched and silly daubs, denying in the press the first principles of painting, sneering at Corot and Millet and Rousseau, and snubbing the unfortunate young men who had had the conscience to get themselves taught something of art before setting up as artists. One or two more feeble efforts it may make, but the end is evidently not very far off.

The nature of the present display would seem to indicate that it has at last—too late—begun to dawn upon the managers that younger men must in future produce the work that shall be known, whether at home or abroad, as American. The Hudson River School has almost died out; the Coast of Maine School is dying, and the painters of barefooted boys, of "slicked-up" shoeblacks, of Seville orange-women and ideal heads, are becoming fewer, and some of them appear to be growing ashamed of their wretched performances. At any rate there is a smaller percentage of such work in this exhibition than in any that has been held for years in the Academy building. But it is noteworthy that there is also less good work by the younger artists. These, with few exceptions, seem to have turned their backs on the Academy in disdain; so that although the total number of works exhibited is but three hundred and fifty-seven, the standard of the exhibition is not raised, but is rather lower than even that of last year. The show looks better, to be sure, at the first glance; but that is only because there is less of it.

Occupying what has come to be a position of honor in the corridor at the head of the stairs is Rosina Emmet's "Autumn," a life-size figure of a girl in a greenish gown arranging some autumn foliage and flowers about what appears to be a painted leather screen. The figure, though not very well done, is the only part of the picture that is at all satisfactory. The accessories are poorly painted, and the composition is awkward and confused. It is a distinct falling off from her former work. Immediately over it is one of the best bits of painting in the exhibition, a still-life study of "Hydrangeas," showing a just appreciation of tones of color. This is by Ward W. Wright. "Peonies," by Elizabeth Boott, "Still Life," by J. Louis Webb, and "Rhododendrons," by Kate H. Greatorex, are fairly successful. The flower painters are but poorly represented. The "Marigolds" of Julia Dillon are not quite up to what we have a right to expect of her. Julie H. Beers is going backward, and Effie B. Wilmarth is not up to her usual standard. It is always a puzzle to account for the tendency of painters of flowers and still-life to choose for their exhibition pictures such difficult and thankless subjects as haphazard collections of milk-weed pods, shreds of birch-bark and bunches of asters and golden-rods. M. J. Seabury might certainly have spent her time to better purpose than in painting her "November Study," which is composed of matters of this sort.

In the East Gallery we come across some works of the old, old type, soon, let us hope, to be banished forever from our exhibitions. Others are not so bad. Otto Stark shows, at least, good intentions in his figure of an old shoemaker, mostly in shade, examining the sole of a badly-worn brogan. Fred J. Waugh's "Midsummer Day" is a pleasant little landscape with apple trees, cabbages, white hens and gray grass. Charles F. Ulrich's "Engraver on Glass" is another of his rather photographic studies, excellent in its way, though not in the least a picture. Let us be thankful, though, for excellence of any kind. "A Broken Necklace," by J. T. Beele, "Preparing for the Masked Ball," by Edward Grenet, and "Dog Talk," by John M. Tracy, are much above the average of the exhibition. "Lucy and her Pet," by Helen C. Hovenden, is very promising.

J. W. Alexander's life-size, full-length portrait of a little girl in the South Gallery is cruder but also broader and more artist-like work than what we have been used to see by him. "A Garden Nook, Nantucket," is one of Mr. Dielman's quaint and pleasing little canvases. There is a curious declaration of love à la Breton in "An Inn," by Charles X. Harris. "Cloud and Sunset, Long Island," is a theatrical landscape with crude greens and hard foliage and sky. It is by Thomas Moran. The younger Morans, Percy and Leon, have, as usual, a large number of cleverly painted out-of-door subjects in which progress is not very perceptible. "An Idyl," by Fred J. Waugh, is a picture of a nude creature of the female sex sitting in a painful and precarious position on a narrow horizontal limb of a tree above a garden full of flowers. "Light and Shade," by Frederick W. Freer, is a study of a pretty young lady who appears to have made a very liberal use of pearl powder on her arms and neck. "Where Noonday is as Twilight" is a strong wood interior with a seated female figure, by Dielman. Hamilton Hamilton has a picture of two girls "Caught in a Shower" of paint. "A Spare Minute," by S. J. Guy, is composed, as Thoreau said Boston was, mainly of barrels.

The West Gallery is illuminated by one of J. H. Beard's jokes about animals. How many generations of wicked little boys and girls have laughed at those atrocious jokes of Mr. Beard's just as they would have enjoyed plunging pussy in the washtub, or attaching an old kettle to Rover's tail? But already these curious paintings begin to look out of place at the Academy. There are dealers in colored lithographs in William Street who would doubtless exhibit Mr. Beard's comic creations in their show-windows along with caricatures of boxing-matches and portraits of celebrated editors. Another lugubrious joke is "Birds of a Feather," by W. A. Coffin. It would be more correct to term them birds without a feather, for one is a paper duck and the other is a skeleton. They are much better painted, however, than Mr. Beard's terrier and spider, and on that score, at least, have a perfect right to their place. The ghosts of two boys who were drowned while fishing on Sunday form the subject of "The Patient Fisherman," by M. S. Waterhouse. There is a fair landscape, "Pasture and Meadow," by Charles Melville Dewey, and a cleverer one, but not so good, after all, by C. Morgan McIlhenny, "In the Shadow of the Maples." "Reflection," by Douglas Volk, will make those reflect who thought they saw in the three or four tours de force which this young painter has produced evidence of real talent. It is refreshing to come upon one such work in this exhibition as William P. W. Dana's "Foggy Day." Mr. Dana's larger landscape in the South Gallery is not nearly so good, and the contrast between the two brings up once more the principle which many of our younger and cleverer artists have tried to impress upon the public, that a man's best work is not usually his most ambitious or most labored.

ROBERT JARVIS.

#### THE SKETCH EXHIBITION.

THE second annual exhibition of sketches and studies at the American Art Gallery is an improvement upon the similar exhibition of last year. Still it contains a large number of works which ought not to have been accepted. Coming into the rooms, however, from the Academy show, one is agreeably impressed at the outset by the earnest, spontaneous and hopeful character of much of the work here shown. There are works of the same kind at the Academy, but there they are a small minority; here fully one half the exhibits excite respect and attract attention, if but for a moment. The very first number is a very respectable little study of rocks and sky over an "Unused Road," by H. L. Hillyer. Near it is a good sketch of a head by C. N. Flagg. Maitland Armstrong has a study of "Autumn Fields" and an excellent picture of the "Water Gate" of a Breton farm. The latter has been seen before, but will well repay looking at a second and a third time. "Brace's Cove, Cape Ann," by F. K. M. Rehn, is far better than anything of like subject in the Academy. "My Country Cousin," by J. Carroll Beckwith, is interesting from its naivetés. "A Hillside."